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ABSTRACT

Voluntary organizations have filled the gap to provide social and community services in Ecuador in areas where government or profit-making agencies were absent. There was a proliferation of activities for the poorest sector of society in response to government neglect. Activities focused on economic and social progress through community development and the American Field Service (AFS) stressed the development of an international perspective. Volunteer organizations in Ecuador fell into five groups: (1) social service; (2) community civil service; (3) cultural promotion; (4) education and apprenticeship programs; and (5) community development. Volunteers were classified according to age, social class, motivation, and the settings in which they worked. AFS volunteers in Ecuador included both scholarship recipients and their parents. Generally they were from upper and middle-class families and were university students or graduates. A meeting with AFS volunteers and other volunteer groups for the purposes of this study was held in May 1988. The information forthcoming from the meeting indicated that members of other social action volunteer groups did not perceive clearly the nature of the work done by the AFS volunteers and considered them an elite group uninterested in addressing social needs. Seven recommendations were offered for the creation of a strong AFS Program in Ecuador. (NL)

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Summary of Findings from Ecuador

by Ron Rivera, Project Consultant
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THE AFS VOLUNTEER RESOURCES STUDY

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The AFS Center for the Study of Intercultural Learning

The AFS Volunteer Resources Study
Summary of Findings from Ecuador

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October 1989

Once part of the Inca empire and inheritor of a colonial legacy formed over 300 years ago, Ecuador today is a developing Latin American republic containing vast oil reserves that hold the promise of release from poverty. Yet despite oil booms, formal development plans, and an influx of foreign investment, the "forgotten majority" has continued to suffer from deprivations. In the mid-1980s, 54.5% of the population were classified as below the poverty line, and the bottom 40% of the population received about 5.2% of the total income. As Ecuador has moved from a peasant and agricultural toward an urban and commercial society, education has become increasingly important in facilitating greater social mobility. Yet close to 50% of children have failed to complete primary school and the illiteracy rate is estimated at 15% or higher among various segments of the population.[1]

Recent regimes have made cutbacks in expenditures and increased basic food prices at the cost of much needed social services. In common with other Latin American countries, Ecuador has seen a proliferation of charitable and developmental activities directed toward the poorest segments of the society as well as self-help organizations that have arisen in direct response to government neglect. While the vast majority of these programs started as charitable agencies under church auspices, many have moved well beyond the charity concept to provide such services as legal assistance, technical training, basic health education, literacy efforts, housing programs, and cooperatives. These voluntary organizations "fill in the gap" to provide social and community services in areas where government or profit-making agencies are absent.

There was no word in Latin America for volunteer until the Spanish introduced the term "voluntario," which often refers to foreign volunteers. Those working for the Peace Corps, for example, as well as young and middle-class volunteers who work with AFS, the Red Cross, and European external agencies, are called "voluntarios." While "voluntario" can be found in the dictionary and people know what it means, the preferred term in Ecuador today is "companero," someone you break bread with. Among the Indian population, the word often used is "minga," which means the act of doing something together. Even when "volunteer" may be the formal term used by an organization, the volunteers themselves prefer to say "los companeros" instead of

"los voluntarios." The term "mystic," often cited as an ideal volunteer quality, means the desire to serve based on a clear perception of social problems.

"There is no clear and profound understanding or consciousness of volunteerism in Ecuador," said the President of a development foundation in Quito. Yet, according to the AFS Director, "It is a myth to say that Ecuadorians do not like to work as volunteers. There are causes like the Red Cross, the children, and the sick which attract the people, and the suffering of others is what most motivates them." A long tradition of efforts by such individuals -- motivated by Christian charity and a desire to serve God -- has helped to alleviate human suffering through work in orphanages, hospitals, and asylums. They have represented and continue to represent one of the major models of volunteerism in the country, the social welfare model. Such groups as Asociacion Benefactora de Enfermos Incurables (Beneficial Society for the Incurably Ill), Fundacion Adopcion Nuestros Ninos (Our Children Adoption Foundation), and Women's Committees of various professional organizations and international service clubs are particularly active in social service activities.

Several private entities have been created to coordinate and organize volunteer activity, most notably SEGESVOL (Volunteer Services Clearing House), established in Quito in 1969. Organizations have also been established to coordinate activity in specific service areas; for example, ASVOLH (Hospital Volunteer Service Association) brings together the various groups and individuals who cooperate in hospital work. In addition to these coordinating organizations at the national level, similar groups have been organized regionally. The growing importance of a volunteer sector in Ecuador is further manifested by the increasing number of seminars, courses, and meetings attended by volunteers as well as the presence of IAVE (International Association for Volunteer Effort) in Ecuador.

Today the focus of organized volunteer activity in Ecuador is clearly moving toward economic and social progress through community development. While the social welfare approach to volunteer activity continues, another kind of volunteer movement has also come into being, philosophically committed to promoting self-sufficiency and peaceful change at the community level. Among the most important groups in this area are the lay volunteer services associated with churches and religious orders. People working with groups such as the Salesian Lay Volunteers are involved in organizational, educational, and advisory activities at the community level.

Thus, two volunteer traditions operate side by side in today's Ecuador. On the one hand, many volunteers continue to offer spiritual consolation or small amounts of financial aid to help fellow human beings through sickness, pain, hunger, loneliness, and death. On the other hand, coordinating institutions, administered by highly trained professionals, work toward promoting self-sufficiency through literacy cam-

paigns, apprenticeship programs, women's activities, small business development, and the generation of community institutions and infrastructures. As a result the social groups from which volunteers are recruited have been broadened to include young people from the middle and lower-middle classes, professionals, and community and neighborhood leaders who will benefit from the voluntary effort. While a large gap exists between the day-to-day tasks of the volunteer and the vision of the self-sufficiency model of community development, clearly Ecuador is involved in a process of change, a transitional phase in the history of its volunteer sector.

Where does AFS fit in? While there are two dominant models of volunteerism in Ecuador, there is a third model -- less well recognized and accepted -- inherent in the work of AFS and similar groups. The focus of this model is the development of an international perspective, an acknowledgment of Ecuador as part of the world community. However, the traditional mission of AFS -- to provide intercultural learning opportunities for young people to better understand themselves and the world around them -- is not clearly understood in Ecuador. This became obvious during the course of a meeting held in May 1988 for purposes of this study in which young AFS volunteers participated. They were challenged by serious questions from members of social action volunteer groups who did not perceive clearly the nature of the work done by the AFS volunteers and considered AFS participants as members of an elite group uninterested in addressing social needs.

Yet young AFS volunteers identified many of the same ideal qualities for volunteer commitment as those working in social services and community development. These included patience, humanity, sincerity, generosity, and a sense of "voluntad." Among the social attitudes cited by AFS volunteers in common with many others were the desire to help others, love and understanding of other people, and a dedication to collaborate or serve the community. Images which they chose to symbolize AFS service included those related to peace, internationalism, and solidarity such as outstretched or joined hands, a dove of peace, and a globe. The person embodying the ideal of volunteer service was overwhelmingly considered to be Mother Theresa by both AFS volunteers and those from other settings. In addition, they named other religious figures, including Christ, St. Francis of Assisi, nuns and priests. AFS was the only group, however, to mention Gandhi and Martin Luther King as individuals who represented the ideals of volunteer service. One AFS volunteer defined volunteerism as "an expression of solidarity among people of the whole world, of all races, colors, and nationalities." Those working with the AFS program can help establish its relevance to Ecuador and their country's role in the world community.

Where are the Volunteers?

The volunteer organizations of Ecuador -- estimated at 350 to 400 in number -- may be classified in five groups, based on the types of activities in which they are engaged.

1. Social Service. These social welfare organizations, including the Junta de Beneficiencia de Guayaquil, are among the oldest and most traditional of the volunteer agencies in Ecuador. The need in this area is great, due first to the vulnerability of the target groups: children, the elderly, the handicapped, and displaced; and second, to the minimal level of assistance provided by the government to social service institutions. Among the settings in which the volunteers work are hospitals, special education schools, youth homes, and a leper colony. They serve as social visitors in hospitals, advisors to mothers of handicapped children, community relations representatives for special education, and advocates for abandoned children. In addition to performing hands-on work, many volunteers become officers for coordinating organizations, volunteer committees, or foundations.

> **Example of a Social Service Organization** ASVOLH (Hospital Volunteer Association) coordinates hospital volunteer services, such as moral support to the sick and their families, training courses and advisory services on community health, assistance to the social service staff, and recreational activities for patients. In Quito, an average of 30 to 40 volunteers are organized within each hospital. They wear uniforms with insignias, pledge a certain number of service hours per week or month, have a high school diploma, and undergo additional training related to hospital volunteer work. Typically, these volunteers are women who have retired from their professions or who have found the demands of home and family have diminished. They are described as compassionate, patient, punctual, and inspired by a sense of Christian charity and good will.

2. Community Civil Service. Community civil service organizations were created to respond to natural disasters. The principal organizations in this category are the Red Cross, the Junta de Defensa Civil (Civil Defense Group), and the Cuerpo de Bomberos (Fire Department). Volunteer service in this area is particularly demanding, requiring not only a strong civic spirit, but discipline and a willingness to take physical risks in potentially dangerous situations. Volunteers must be motivated to work night and day when necessary and be able to identify what is needed in times of emergency. Many young people work in these civil service groups; among those individuals interviewed, the oldest was 35, and most were in their 20s. In general, the civil service institutions have well established hierarchical structures and operate according to strict rules.

Example of a Civil Service Organization The Junior Red Cross attracts volunteers from among high school students with a desire for community service. The organization demands regular attendance, punctuality, and participation in training courses. The system encourages young volunteers to be competitive by earning points that lead to positions of responsibility. In addition to gaining specialized knowledge, young people are aided in their careers through their relationships with local authorities and public and private institutions. They also experience the intangible satisfaction of having saved lives and contributed to the welfare of families and society. Qualities needed particularly by first aid workers are friendliness, sincerity, and the courage that will enable them to risk their lives for others.

3. Cultural Promotion and Dissemination. Included in this group are organizations dedicated to quality of life and environmental issues, promotion of cultural and artistic programs, and such internationally oriented activities as youth exchanges and human rights advocacy. This is the only area of volunteer activity with a perspective geared toward internationalism and the promotion of world peace. In addition to AFS, organizations in this area include the Sociedad Feminina de Cultura (Feminine Culture Society), Asociacion de Clubes de Jardinerias (Association of Gardening Clubs), and Fundacion Natura (Nature Foundation). Since cultural promotion and dissemination activities are not well understood by the public, volunteers who work in these fields must make a greater effort to interpret them within their social environment. Members of these groups are often seen as elite or privileged individuals who are not addressing the real problems of society. Qualities needed by volunteers working in this area, therefore, are perseverance and a strong belief in what they are doing.

Example of a Cultural Promotion and Dissemination Program The National Federation of UNESCO Clubs, established to disseminate the ideals of UNESCO in Ecuador, works through clubs in private and public high schools. Club advisors are teachers who want to provide cultural enhancement for their students beyond that available in the classroom. Students and their advisors direct their activities toward exhibits and educational programs on cultural issues and topics of international concern. While both the students and their teachers display a high level of idealism, the lack of respect and understanding of people outside the organization affects the morale of the members.

4. Education and Apprenticeship Programs. A number of foundations and centers provide instruction, training, and apprenticeship programs to members of low income groups in practical skills areas. In many cases these activities are included in broad community development projects or in jails and drug rehabilitation centers. Some

programs have ties with the Catholic church; others result from the initiative of a small group of individuals. Programs are available free of charge to youth or women with low incomes or to those in jails or drug rehabilitation programs who need to be reintegrated into society. Volunteers include many middle-class professionals and high school graduates who want to share their knowledge and skills with those who have little chance of getting ahead in society without such assistance.

Examples of Education and Apprenticeship Programs Quito's Fundacion La Familia trains young women in sewing, dressmaking, and cosmetology and helps them to set up their own shops. The Center for the Advancement and Training of Women offers training in child care skills. A community-level church program sponsors weekly meetings of a youth group which promotes family values and offers courses in catechism, dressmaking, and the operation of community stores.

5. Community Development This area has assumed increasing importance in Ecuador as organizations which formerly delivered social welfare services have reoriented their programs and methodology toward community development strategies. Volunteers working in this field engage in a wide variety of activities, including development of day care centers, schools, and training courses in marginal neighborhoods; establishment of community centers housing cooperatives; provision of pediatric services to lower class families; assistance in medical dispensaries; provision of accounting and legal services; and vocational and civic orientation courses. The volunteers come from a range of backgrounds, including those groups which benefit from the volunteer activities as well as active professionals who donate specialized services. The rationale underlying this approach is self-development of communities accompanied by training.

An Organization in Transition The National Institute of the Child and Family (INNFA), a private voluntary organization which receives public funding, was originally organized with a social welfare focus. Its volunteers were essentially upper-class women who raised funds for specific programs. INNFA has recently tried to reorient its activities toward community development through the recruitment of more trained young professionals and coordination of activities with other regional and local organizations. However, the new volunteers feel frustrated by the INNFA bureaucracy and complain that they do not have a chance to develop the activities for which they volunteered. At the same time, many traditional volunteers continue with a social welfare approach, despite recent training, and view volunteer service as a social activity to fill free time. While the restructuring of INNFA's

volunteer service is far from realized at this time, there are signs of change in the volunteer sector as a whole.

Who are the Volunteers?

A general classification of the volunteers in Ecuador may be drawn according to their age, social class, motivation, and the settings in which they work. Four distinct types of volunteers can be identified.

1. The "traditional" volunteer has been a mature woman, a homemaker, with money and free time available. Her volunteer work is in the social service area, where volunteers interviewed averaged 50.9 years of age and 13.3 years of service. The spouse of a military officer, businessman, or professional, she is generally from an upper socio-economic group. Motivated by good will and a desire to participate in social activities, she typically has a secondary school education but no professional training.

2. For a number of volunteers, service within the context of Christian charity and sacrifice constitutes the essence of life. Many began working in church-related activities at an early age. These volunteers are found particularly in community development organizations, where volunteers interviewed averaged 40 years of age and 15 years of service. A number of younger volunteers from middle and lower social classes are also often motivated by Christian values of solidarity and service. They are well represented in community civil service activities and in church-related neighborhood programs, where volunteers interviewed averaged 25 years of age and 4 years of service.

3. For young volunteers from affluent families, volunteer activity is a way to develop a network of social relationships which may prove helpful in their professional lives. These volunteers are found particularly in cultural and sports organizations for young people and AFS, where volunteers interviewed averaged 25 years of age and 2.4 years of service.

4. Professionals between the ages of 25 and 40 constitute a somewhat smaller group of volunteers due to family and professional responsibilities. Active in community development organizations, this group is motivated not only by social commitment but also by professionalism and the broader networks, recognition, and accomplishments associated with it. As such, this group may represent more than any other the move toward a new model of volunteerism in Ecuador, one based on greater professionalism and a community development rationale.

Motivations for Volunteering

Social conscience and the need to help others. By far the greatest number of volunteers interviewed across all four groups were consciously motivated by a desire to help alleviate individual suffering and to better the lives of those in need. Many expressed their ideals in societal terms, that is, working to eradicate injustice, poverty, and the alienation of some groups from society.

Service in sharing knowledge and experience. Closely allied with the need to help others is the concept of unselfish sharing of knowledge and experience. This may be specific knowledge, such as that shared by the mother of a disabled child trying to improve a special education school or that of the many professionals who wish to share their medical, legal, technical, or other skills. In the case of AFS, returned students want to share their experiences with potential exchange students. Many volunteers feel a need to return to society the love and benefits received in their own lives.

Collaboration and serving community needs. One volunteer who has worked on her own initiative as a volunteer in a poor community found a much better approach in working with others through INNFA, which has many more resources. Some mention the consciousness of solidarity and brotherhood in working for community improvement, others the sharing of talents and the importance of identifying the needs not just of individuals, but of the community as a whole.

Making friends and broadening social networks. For younger volunteers, this may mean enjoying social outings and parties with fellow students as well as developing contacts which will help them in their later professional lives. Older volunteers value the opportunity to work with young people, particularly in the AFS program, to become acquainted with staff and volunteers in the institutions where they work, and to meet people in other groups and classes.

Self-realization and self-development. Volunteers of all ages feel that service gives greater meaning to their lives. They not only feel useful, but have an opportunity to clarify personal values. Individuals may eliminate selfish attitudes through group work and contribute to their personal growth through contact with individuals from different social groups and cultures.

Educational factors: learning from and teaching others. This type of motivation is particularly strong in the cultural promotion and diffusion programs and education and apprenticeship activities. While one volunteer wanted to learn how to speak in public, another wanted to know "how to serve." Other volunteers expressed a desire to help in the education and development of women in Ecuador. Volunteers with AFS

are often especially interested in learning about other cultures and understanding the mentality of other countries.

A sense of obligation or gratitude. Volunteers in the AFS program are nighly motivated by a desire to repay the opportunity they themselves or their family members had as AFS students. Volunteers working in social service and community development programs particularly express a sense of moral commitment to help others as well as an opportunity to work for what they believe in. Such a volunteer stated, "One must respond to the presence of so much misery in life."

Fulfilling God's will. "I want to do something for others and return to God what He has given me," a typical volunteer comments. Such volunteers believe their service fulfills a moral and Christian duty and also contributes to their own spiritual growth. Those motivated by liberation theology seek to serve God by bringing about change through fighting poverty and injustice.

Satisfactions of Volunteering

Rewards: tangible and intangible. Many volunteers express satisfaction from seeing people happier because of their work, feeling that they are filling a need, or collaborating with others in a spirit of common endeavor. "The reward is greater than a salary." Others prefer more tangible awards, such as titles, plane tickets to international conferences, or positions of prestige and responsibility.

Results and achievements. A number of volunteers expressed satisfaction at seeing concrete results from their work: for example, finding homes for abandoned children, knowing that a community group has adopted measures to improve its health and well-being, constructing a community center with no money, or creating a peace council.

Personal learning. Volunteer work has helped individuals overcome their fear of making speeches, express their opinions more freely and their ideas more effectively. Some have been helped to accept responsibility, determine priorities better, and deal more effectively with people. Others have gained a new range of social, political, and economic knowledge.

Personal Factors Affecting Volunteerism

Influences from childhood and earlier life. Many volunteers grew up with the spirit of helping others. "In Quito our home was always open to serve others," was the comment of one interviewee. Another volunteer gained experience in the U.S. working

with handicapped people, and a third volunteer now shares the therapy she learned to help her paralyzed son.

Support of family. The overwhelming majority of volunteers mentioned that their spouses and children understand and support what they are doing. One woman noted, "While the family was jealous at first because of my time away from them, this has changed and now my son also volunteers." Most families support volunteer activity because they know how much it means to both the volunteers and their beneficiaries.

Attitudes of friends. Mixed reactions are reported by friends and acquaintances of volunteers. While some see the volunteers as "better people" for the work they do, others think "volunteers are crazy to spend so much time" doing volunteer work when they might get paid jobs. Some friends consider working in marginal neighborhoods risky. Young people often find that while they prefer recreation, they respect the volunteers' desire to assume such responsibility.

Disincentives and Barriers to Volunteering

Image of volunteering. One administrator of a voluntary organization indicates that there is "no clear understanding or consciousness of volunteerism in Ecuador." The image of volunteerism as "ladies' tea parties" and "charity" persists along with the changing concept of volunteerism geared toward social and community development. Lack of information about where to go or how to participate in volunteer work is a deterrent to many young people who wish to help. At the same time many organizations have difficulty finding volunteers and are not always certain where to look.

Relations among volunteers. Some volunteers who participate solely for publicity and personal prestige offer poor models for prospective volunteers and provoke conflicts with those who give their time less selfishly. A number of volunteers also believe fund raising should be kept separate from hands-on activities so that possible conflicts between volunteers working in these two areas are eliminated. Some younger volunteers feel that the older volunteers limit their activities and fail to instruct or motivate them sufficiently.

Need for standards, orientation, and training. Volunteers often receive no training or feel the training they have received is inadequate for the roles they must perform. In general, volunteers cite a need for practical courses and materials in such areas as "what it means to be a volunteer," communication skills, administration, and human relations as well as specialized courses in the areas of their volunteer work. While

many organizations do provide training, the duration, nature, and quality of the training vary.

Organization and management of volunteer activities. Volunteers of all ages often are uncertain what is expected of them and how to start new projects. Some volunteers complain of bureaucracy and administrative inefficiency. Professionals working as volunteers on community development projects often feel frustrated at their inability to carry out projects in a manner consistent with their training. Volunteers lose enthusiasm when too many meetings impinge on concrete action.

Lack of responsiveness to volunteers. Most volunteers want to know their views are taken seriously and to feel that they are participating in the organization. It is important for those working with volunteers to communicate regularly with them and to listen to their views and suggestions.

Psychological barriers. A number of volunteers reported feeling overwhelmed by the magnitude of the issues and the incapacity of one person alone to deal with a serious problem such as maltreatment of children in a day care center. Sometimes volunteers experience apprehension as they find it necessary to oppose those in authority or to confront colleagues; for example, a young lawyer was viewed with suspicion by older lawyers because of his efforts to humanize the legal profession.

Individual and Organizational Problems in Volunteering

Limitation of material resources. Lack of funds is a major problem for both individuals and organizations. The magnitude of social problems results in a need to limit program priorities and expectations. Fund raising is particularly difficult when resources are limited and requires patience, time, and organization which are often lacking. This situation can be a disincentive to volunteering. An organization may lack the economic and human resources needed to accomplish its goals, and, although volunteering assumes even more importance under these conditions, individual volunteers may feel impotent when faced with the size of the problems.

Lack of time and time management. Lack of time is frequently mentioned by volunteers as a reason for not devoting more time to service or not volunteering at all. However, there is a need to manage well the time that is devoted to volunteering. This problem is accentuated if volunteer activities are poorly organized and volunteer leaders do not themselves set a good example of time management.

Staff-volunteer relations. In many settings volunteers are suspect. Professional staff, feeling threatened, fear volunteers want to take over their jobs. In some cases the staff

give orders as in a boss-employee relationship, causing resentment and staff-volunteer conflict. One hospital solved this problem by holding a series of orientation meetings in which the functions and duties of the volunteers in relationship to professional staff positions were clearly explained.

Lack of sufficient commitment on part of volunteers. Organizations report that many volunteers are not highly motivated, do not want to dedicate the time necessary to see the results of their work, and are inconsistent in their volunteer activities. In addition, many people volunteer thinking the work will lead to a paid job and leave when it does not.

Societal factors. Dealing with bureaucracy, lack of collaboration and communication with people outside the organization, and difficulty in implementing projects can be major problems. There is at the same time a feeling that many Ecuadorans do not want to solve their problems or work in a spirit of cooperation for the future, that they want to have opportunities brought to them. In addition, cross-cultural problems exist among Ecuadorians of different social classes.

Organizational perspective. In general, volunteers provide a high, professional quality of work. Working from a spirit of personal and spiritual commitment, they can generate new ideas and change processes without the restrictions of salaried positions, but they also maintain the freedom to function as individuals and sometimes move away from the institutional perspective. Also, the initial enthusiasm of volunteers may decline and an organization dependent on their assistance must work to retain their motivation and good will. Two major problems are cited by administrators: volunteers do not understand the importance of a program's financial aspects and they often create conflicts by wanting to take part in all decisions through a participatory consultation process.

Focus on AFS Volunteer Activities

AFS volunteers in Ecuador include two groups: young people, most of whom are "becarios" or scholarship recipients, and their parents, who have recently been invited to participate in AFS activities. The young volunteers, ranging in age from 19 to 23, serve for up to three years upon their return to Ecuador. In general, they come from affluent or middle-class families, and many are university students or graduates. The majority of AFS volunteers are from Quito, Cuenca, or Guayaquil, with smaller groups from outlying areas. For this study, interviews were conducted in Quito, Guayaquil, Ambato, and Manta.

A primary volunteer function is to help with the selection of exchange participants. Other functions include advising families and program coordinators, providing orientation for students going overseas, helping with student problems, and serving as officers, representatives, or committee members for the AFS organization.

Motivation. The recently returned volunteers are motivated by the desire to compensate AFS for the opportunity to live in a foreign country, to enhance their understanding of other people and cultures, to establish a network of friendships both locally and internationlly, to develop possibilities for future travel and employment, and to take advantage of opportunities for recreation and a change of environment. Parents of volunteers generally support their children and become motivated to volunteer themselves because they see the work as a form of repayment to AFS. For many, the AFS program and related volunteer work are a family tradition shared by siblings, parents, cousins, aunts, and uncles. Older volunteers who have served for a number of years have found in AFS a way to receive recognition and respect for their work.

Satisfactions. Younger volunteers like to make friends and broaden their social and cultural experience, to gain experience in human relations and personal psychology, to assume responsibility outside their families, and to put to use what they have learned by helping others. Their parents derive satisfaction from helping other students have experiences like those of their children. In addition, they often gain satisfaction from collaboration and working as a team with other parents.

Problems

Lack of communication between staff and volunteers. Many AFS volunteers feel decisions are made without their input or knowledge. In addition, volunteers sometimes fail to understand what is expected of them because their tasks are not clearly explained. Others feel a lack of recognition and support from the staff.

Orientation and training. Many AFS volunteers indicated a need for workshops on interviewing techniques, how to run meetings, and the selection process, as well as guidelines containing clearly delineated selection criteria. A number had no training or found the AFS training insufficient, relying on personal experience rather than on the manuals provided.

Lack of motivation. AFS reported that many returned students are unpunctual, irresponsible, or unwilling to follow through on the responsibilities which they have accepted. A number leave volunteer work in order to return to their studies full time. At the same time, there are a few among the AFS volunteers who have assumed parallel volunteer activities such as working with the Red Cross or associations for the

handicapped. These volunteers are found to be more active and better motivated than others and to have a broader understanding regarding the context of their work.

The selection process. Dissatisfaction in some areas has focused on the difficulty in choosing among the candidates (who may be personal friends), the lack of clear and objective criteria for selection, and the existence of a quota system. Some believe the program reflects social discrimination because its high cost prevents many worthy students from participating.

Looking Toward the Future

While the AFS program in Ecuador is the oldest in Latin America, dating back to 1949, it was not until the mid 1960s that an office was opened in Ecuador, and efforts to develop a volunteer force began even later. The program has retained many loyal adherents who volunteer their time and energies out of gratitude and a sense of obligation. However, the turnover rate is high among volunteers and there is evidence that some organizational and structural changes could contribute to greater volunteer satisfaction and increased participation. At the same time, the AFS program is often perceived as elitist by volunteer groups oriented toward social service and community development as well as by the public at large. This elitist image may also serve as a demotivating factor in attracting and holding volunteers.

Recommendations

1. AFS Ecuador should make a concerted effort to build on its strengths by reaching out to program returnees and demonstrating the unique function AFS performs among the voluntary organizations in Ecuador.

To develop a strong volunteer base AFS should create a system to keep in touch with all of its previous participants and their parents and host families, possibly through a computerized alumnae directory. Former participants could be kept informed of the AFS program through a newsletter or at social gatherings where they meet new participants and volunteers. Prominent alumnae and respected public figures could address the need to develop international awareness, using Ecuador-specific materials to demonstrate both the extent of the problem and ways in which this need can be met though the AFS program.

2. AFS should provide adequate organizational and managerial structures to support its volunteers.

AFS could alleviate volunteer dissatisfaction by formalizing its volunteer structure through the creation of a legal national organization with an elected Board of Directors, modeled after similar organizations in other countries. The role of volunteers in

the implementation of AFS programs and operations, as well as their responsibility and authority with respect to the national AFS office, should be clarified. A structured framework of volunteer tasks and roles would encourage volunteers who demonstrate the desire and capacity for additional responsibility to progress toward new leadership roles and greater recognition. The national office and proposed national volunteer organization should also consider jointly the special features and problems of AFS in smaller and provincial communities and how each might address these issues and solve these problems.

3. AFS should conduct a volunteer recruitment campaign using appropriate media opportunities to identify and solicit new groups of volunteers.
A strong volunteer base should include groups which AFS has not previously considered, for example: students who are interested in international affairs but have not participated in AFS; retired people who would like to work with young people; business and professional people who might be identified through AFS parents and former participants; university and school personnel who have an interest in young people and/or international affairs; and more men, identified through business, fraternal, and professional organizations.

4. AFS should ensure that adequate orientation and training opportunities are provided for its volunteers.
AFS training should begin with an orientation program about AFS objectives and procedures in which all volunteers participate regardless of previous experience. A systematic program through which older volunteers train younger ones should be organized through the national volunteer organization. The organization should also be responsible for keeping abreast of training opportunities on specialized topics: communication skills, interpersonal relations, holding effective meetings. Some of this information might be available to AFS volunteers through other voluntary organizations. Special attention should be given to clarifying selection criteria and procedures, providing volunteers with whatever materials and training they may need if they are to carry out this task.

5. Consideration should be given to a formal program of AFS fund raising in Ecuador.
If qualified low income students or teachers from rural areas are to participate in AFS programs, AFS Ecuador must be able to enlist assistance and financial contributions from banks, multinationals, or local businesses in order to achieve this purpose. In developing a fund raising program the national office would need to coordinate its efforts with the international office, which could provide relevant audio-visual materials and information on proven strategies for gaining corporate scholarship funding. AFS parents and older returnees should also be enlisted to develop connections with businesses which might provide financial or advisory resources.

6. AFS should demonstrate that it is responsive to its volunteers' needs and interests.

Volunteers must be able to express their views and develop a sense of participation and involvement in the organization. For this purpose, the AFS office should consider establishing a "grievance procedure" to handle complaints and problems as well as regular meetings to discuss volunteer tasks, materials, and procedures. Support of the volunteer base may also involve dealing with differences of opinion among volunteers, providing opportunities to socialize and exchange views, and helping younger volunteers learn how to use their exchange experience and volunteer work to further their career objectives. Finally, it cannot be stressed too often that appropriate expressions of thanks and/or public recognition of the volunteers' contributions are essential in order to retain their motivation and interest.

7. AFS should cooperate with other voluntary organizations to improve the image of volunteerism in Ecuador.

AFS might help organize and participate in a public education program to enhance the image of volunteering in the country. Special materials could be developed showing the financial contribution volunteers make to the economy through their service, and national or regional awards could be made. Joint meetings to share common problems and develop guidelines for improving volunteer service and an exchange of information about training programs, publications, and resources would produce greater solidarity among existing volunteers. Through such cooperative efforts AFS would also benefit its own organization by providing its volunteers with the broader network of social contacts which they seek and a greater understanding of how AFS fits into the national volunteer effort.

NOTES

1. Based on *Ecuador: Fragile Democracy* by David Corkill and David Cubitt (London: Latin America Bureau, 1988).